United Nations CEDAW/C/BTN/Q/8-9

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
16 March 2016

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-fifth session
24 October-18 November 2016
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Bhutan

Legal status of the Convention and definition of discrimination

1. The State party indicates in its combined eighth and ninth periodic reports that a direct presence of the definition of discrimination from the Convention is not yet visible in its legislation and policies (CEDAW/C/BTN/8-9, para. 33).[1] It goes on to state that, where appropriate, efforts are being made to review relevant laws to align the definition of discrimination with article 1 of the Convention (para. 35). Please provide information on steps taken, including the time frame, to amend legislation in order to include a definition of discrimination against women in line with article 1 of the Convention. Please indicate what other laws the State party envisages amending. Please state whether the Convention is directly applicable in the national courts in the light of the article 10 (25) of the Constitution, which provides that a treaty shall be deemed to be the law of Bhutan only upon ratification by Parliament unless it is inconsistent with the Constitution (paras. 33 and 39).

Access to justice

2. In the light of the Committee's previous recommendation (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 20), please provide information on measures taken to increase access to justice for women who are victims of discrimination and violence, including domestic violence, and on the legal aid currently available to support them. Furthermore, please provide information on measures adopted to increase the number of women working on such issues, including in the police force

Note: The present document is being circulated in English, French and Spanish only.

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, paragraph numbers refer to the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the State party.

Please recycle

and other law enforcement authorities. Please provide information on the legal aid regime in place and the extent to which women can gain access to legal aid, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice.

National machinery for the advancement of women

3. Please indicate whether the recent institutional changes with regard to the National Commission for Women and Children have also resulted in increased financial resources, personnel, autonomy, independence and accountability (para. 67). Please clarify whether the strengthening exercise of the Commission has resulted in a clear separation of its functions in respect of women and children, as previously recommended by the Committee (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 14). Please specify the institution that is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention. Please provide an update on the reappointment of gender focal points at the district level as directed by the Commission (para. 71).

Temporary special measures

4. The Committee, in its previous concluding observations (CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 15), noted that the State party would consider adopting and implementing temporary special measures as interpreted by the Committee in its general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures. Please provide information on the temporary special measures adopted in order to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality between men and women in the public sector. Please state the measures being taken to introduce legislation on temporary special measures for women, and addressing the inequality experienced by disadvantaged groups of women (para. 98).

Stereotypes and harmful practices

5. The State party indicates that the National Plan of Action for Gender noted prejudices and stereotypes as a key area of concern and accordingly identified interventions to curb negative impacts on women's empowerment initiatives (para. 102). Please provide details on the nature of those interventions and their outcomes. Furthermore, please provide information on any plans to develop policies and programmes directed at men and women to support the elimination of stereotypes associated with traditional roles in the family, the workplace and society at large and to prevent the re-emergence of stereotypes that are discriminatory towards women (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 24).

6. The State party highlights the results of the Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey, 2010, which indicate that 68.4 per cent of women accepted that the act of domestic violence was justified (para. 103). Please indicate measures taken to address that phenomenon, including through awareness-raising campaigns. According to information before the Committee, child marriage remains common in the State party, its prohibition by law notwithstanding. Please provide information on measures taken, including through legislation and public outreach campaigns, to abolish the practice.

Violence against women

7. According to information before the Committee, many cases of domestic violence and rape, including the traditional practice of "night hunting", during which rape is perpetrated, go unreported. Furthermore, information before the Committee indicates that, when such acts are reported, victims are encouraged to settle complaints through mediation before they can file criminal charges. Please provide information on specific measures taken to eliminate such practices and to address the underreporting of those crimes, as well as to ensure that mediation does not lead to impunity for perpetrators. Please also provide updated information on the current situation with regard to support services and shelters available to women and girls in all regions.

8. The State party indicates that a gender-based violence information management system aimed at supporting effective case management (i.e. record-keeping and follow-up) was launched in 2013 (para. 110). Please indicate whether the predicted results regarding effective case management have been achieved. Please also provide data on the number of cases that have been prosecuted since the Penal Code was amended in 2011 in order to revise the penalties for the crime of rape (para. 43). Please state the law that governs gender-based domestic violence and provide information on measures taken to enforce the law in order to curb domestic violence in the State party.

Trafficking and sexual exploitation

9. Reports indicate that the State party continues to be a source and destination country for trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, for purposes of labour and sexual exploitation. Please provide details on the State party's efforts to provide support to women and girls at risk and, specifically, on existing mechanisms for access to justice and alternative livelihood options (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 22). Please also provide updated information on any measures taken, including entering into bilateral and regional agreements with countries of origin and neighbouring countries (see ibid.).

Participation in political and public life

10. According to information before the Committee, the representation of women in the State party at the parliamentary and local government levels remains very low and there are many obstacles for women, such as discriminatory cultural and traditional beliefs, gender stereotypes and limited skills, which prevent them from participating in political and public life. The State party indicates that few women were elected to the National Assembly and none to the National Council in 2013 (para. 136). The State party also indicates that it has prepared draft legislation to ensure a quota for women in elected offices, including Parliament and local government bodies, and that there is a draft national action plan to promote gender equality in elected offices (paras. 96-97 and 137-138). Please provide information on the content and timeline for the adoption of the legislation aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women in political and public life and on the finalization of the action plan, indicating whether it has adequate resources and the mechanism responsible for its implementation. Please also provide an update on the number of women in Parliament, the judiciary, senior government positions, the foreign service and academic institutions.

11. Please provide information on measures taken to review the criteria required for some positions when such criteria become obstacles or barriers to women's access to decision-making in the public and private sectors, as previously recommended by the Committee (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 18).

Nationality

12. In its previous concluding observations, the Committee raised concerns regarding the situation of ethnic Nepalese women who had lost their Bhutanese citizenship following the enactment of the Citizenship Act (1958) and the resulting discrimination that they continued to face (ibid., para. 35). Please provide updated information on steps taken to address those concerns, including ensuring full access to free education and health services to all children, especially to those under 15 years of age (see ibid., para. 36). Please state whether Bhutanese women can transmit their nationality to their children and their foreign spouses on an equal basis as men (see A/HRC/27/8, para. 120.33).

Education

13. According to information before the Committee, the rate of female enrolment in schools declines steadily in the higher grade levels. The number of girls entering technical and vocational education and training is lower than that of boys and fewer female pupils are progressing to tertiary institutions. Please provide information on measures in place, including the provision of incentives, to encourage girls, especially those in rural areas, to remain in school. Please state whether targeted measures have been adopted to ensure equal access for girls and women to tertiary education and vocational training (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 26). Furthermore, in the light of the information that girls frequently drop out of school owing to marriage or pregnancy, please provide information on steps taken, including policy measures, to encourage pregnant girls and married girls to continue their education. Please provide information on the impact and challenges in the implementation of extended classrooms aimed at facilitating girls' access to education by reducing the walking distance to schools (para. 155). Please also provide information on measures taken to improve the participation of women and girls in sports.

Employment

14. The Committee has been informed that women have limited opportunities for employment outside the agricultural and domestic sectors, causing them to suffer from unemployment and poverty. They are also exposed to high levels of sexual harassment, domestic and labour exploitation and violence in the workplace. Please provide information on measures taken by the State party to ensure access to remedial mechanisms, including access to justice, for women who are victims of exploitation and violence, including sexual harassment (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 30). Please also provide information on coordination and accountability mechanisms in place for complaints of discriminatory practices with regard to employment, and how these have been made available to women, including migrant workers and rural women. Please provide information on measures taken to eliminate horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market, reduce the gender wage gap in the public and private sectors and ensure access to social protection and benefits, including their right to basic health care, for women in the informal sector.

Please provide information on projects in place to create additional job and income opportunities for women.

15. Please provide information on the State party's efforts to address the persistent use of child labour, in particular with regard to girl domestic workers who work long hours, are subjected to violence and lack access to education (see ibid., para. 31). Furthermore, please provide information on public outreach campaigns undertaken to inform the population about the need to protect children, in particular girls, from domestic abuse and ensure their access to education and medical care.

Health

16. Please describe the specific measures taken to increase women's access to high-quality health care, in particular in rural areas, so as to reduce the high incidence of maternal and infant mortality (para. 20). Please provide information on access to mental and geriatric health services and on the existence of an integral health policy for women, including facilities for cancer screening (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 28). Please also provide information on access to abortion by women and girls in the State party, including whether the law provides for abortion on grounds such as threat to the life and health of the pregnant woman, rape, incest and severe fetal impairment. Furthermore, please state whether the law provides for punitive measures for women who undergo abortion and, if it does, the measures being taken to abolish them.

17. According to information before the Committee, sexually transmitted infections and HIV rates are disproportionately high among young people in the State party. Please provide data, disaggregated by age, on the number of women and girls who are HIV-positive in the State party. Please indicate whether sexual and reproductive health education is targeted at both girls and boys, pays special attention to the prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections and is easily available in remote and rural areas. Please also indicate whether research has been undertaken to determine the factors leading to the feminization of HIV/AIDS and whether the State party has developed appropriate strategies to reduce women's vulnerability to HIV (see ibid.).

Rural women and disadvantaged groups of women

18. Please provide information on measures taken to enhance the participation of rural women and those living in remote areas in developing policies and legislation on matters that affect their rights. Please also provide information on existing programmes aimed at ensuring that rural women have access to health care, employment, education and credit facilities, in line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women. Please provide information on measures being taken to improve access to potable water by women, in particular rural women (para. 233).

19. Please provide information on the situation of disadvantaged groups of women, especially older women and women with disabilities. The State party indicates that poverty in female-headed households remains higher than in male-headed households (para. 21). Please provide information on the extent to which female-headed households are disproportionately affected by poverty and access to health services, education, employment and in terms of access to credit facilities. In addition to the various skills development programmes currently in place

(paras. 209-211), what social protection measures have been taken with a view to alleviating the gendered impacts of poverty in society? Please provide information on existing social protection programmes aimed at reducing the economic burden on female-headed households and older women.

Marriage and family relations

20. Please indicate whether the provisions regarding custody of children upon dissolution of marriage have been aligned with article 16 (1) (d) of the Convention, which highlights the need to take into account the best interests of the child, as previously recommended by the Committee (see CEDAW/C/BTN/CO/7, para. 34). Please provide information on measures being taken to eliminate polygamy in the State party.

Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

21. Please indicate any progress made with regard to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention.

United Nations CEDAW/C/BTN/Q/8-9/Add.1

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
15 July 2016

Original: English

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-fifth session
24 October-18 November 2016
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Bhutan

Addendum

Replies of Bhutan

[Date received: 14 July 2016]

16-12171 (E) 010816

Please recycle

Contents

		Page
	List of abbreviations	3
I.	Legal status of the Convention and definition of discrimination	6
II.	Access to justice	6
III.	National machinery for the advancement of women	7
IV.	Temporary special measures	8
V.	Stereotypes and harmful practices	8
VI.	Violence against women	10
VII.	Trafficking and sexual exploitation	12
VIII.	Participation in political and public life	12
IX.	Nationality	14
X.	Education	14
XI.	Employment	16
XII.	Health	19
XIII.	Rural women and disadvantaged groups of women	21
XIV.	Marriage and family relations	23
XV.	Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention	23
	Glossary	24

List of abbreviations

APIC	Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts
BAOWE	Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs
BDBL	Bhutan Development Bank Limited
BDCM	Border Districts Coordination Meeting
BHU	Basic Health Unit
BIMSTEC	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
BMF	Bhutan Media Foundation
BNEW	Bhutan Network for Empowering Women
BNLI	Bhutan National Legal Institute
BOC	Bhutan Olympic Committee
CCPA	Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan 2011
CCPC	Civil and Criminal Procedures Code of Bhutan 2001
CNR	College of Natural Resources
CSSD	Civil Service Support Desk
CPC	Community Police Centres
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEO	District Education Officer
DMS	Department of Medical Services
DVPA	Domestic Violence Prevention Act of Bhutan 2013
DVPRR	Domestic Violence Prevention Rules and Regulations 2015
ECCD	Early Child Care and Development
ECB	Election Commission of Bhutan
FHHs	Female Headed Households
FLT	Functional Literacy Test
FMU	Forensic Medicine Unit
FYP	Five-Year Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender Based Violence Information Management System

GFPs	Gender Focal Persons
GHNCS	Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat
HISC	Health Information Service Centres
IDEVAW	International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women
IRR	Immigration Rules and Regulations 2015
JA	Jabmi Act 2003
JDWNRH	Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital
LEA	Labour and Employment Act 2007
LG	Local Government
KGUMS	Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences
MA	Marriage Act (amendment) of Bhutan 2009
MIS	Management Information System
MoAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forest
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEA	Ministry of Economic Affairs
MoLHR	Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
MoH	Ministry of Health
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NPAPGEEO	National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office
NSPP	Draft National Social Protection Policy
NCWC	National Commission for Women and Children
NPPF	National Pension and Provided Fund
NPAG	National Plan of Action for Gender
NSP	National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of STIs and HIV/AIDS 2012-2016
OAG	Office of the Attorney General
OSCC	One Stop Crisis Centre
PCB	Penal Code (amendment) Act of Bhutan 2011
RBP	Royal Bhutan Police
REAP	Rural Economic Advancement Program

RENEW	Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
RWC	Regulations on Working Conditions 2009
RCSC	Royal Civil Service Commission
RCJ	Royal Court of Justice
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
RICBL	Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan Limited
RUB	Royal University of Bhutan
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SABAH	SAARC Business Association for Home Based Workers
SHG	Self-Help Groups
SPEA	School-based Parenting Education and Awareness Program
SGWBA	State Government of West Bengal and Assam, India.
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
ToT	Training of Trainers
TTI	Technical Training Institutes
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UN Model Legal Aid	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime model law on legal aid in criminal justice systems
VAW	Violence against Women
VBA	Vulnerability Baseline Assessment
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDP	Village Development Plan
VTI	Vocational Training Institutes
WPCU/D	Women and Child Protection Unit/Desk
YLT	Youth Leadership Training

I. Legal status of the Convention and definition of discrimination

1. The principle of non-discrimination, wherever identified appropriate, is considered while drafting new legislation or amending legislation. The National Law Review Taskforce has been instituted with the mandate to review procedures in drafting new legislation, harmonize inconsistencies in legislation and identify legislation which is facing implementation challenges.

2. To ensure inclusion of inequality concerns in all new legislation, the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) Guidelines, which all agencies initiating Bills have to adhere to, have been reviewed from the perspective of women's empowerment and gender equality. They have been submitted to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Office of the Prime Minister for consideration.

3. The Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan 2007 (LEA) of Bhutan clearly defines discrimination in the workplace to protect the welfare of employers/employees and create a conducive environment in the workplace. According to section 237 of the LEA 2007, "discrimination" means "if a person is treated less favourably, either directly or indirectly, on the basis of race, colour, sex, marital status, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, social origin or involvement in a workers' association or as an occupational health and safety representative". In addition, to prevent discrimination against all employees including women, the provisions on prohibition against discrimination of employees and jobseekers under section 11 of the Act state, "an employer and an employment agent shall not discriminate against employees or job applicants for vacancies in connection with recruitment, dismissal, transfer, training and demotion."

4. The Parliamentary Committee on Women, Youth and Children of the National Assembly is currently in the process of conducting consultations with relevant stakeholders, including the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and relevant non-governmental organizations, to amend the Penal Code (amendment) of Bhutan 2011 (PCB) and Marriage Act (amendment) of Bhutan 2009 (MA). This is being done with the intention of making the penalties more stringent and also to ensure that the language is sensitive.

II. Access to justice

5. Legal aid provision is enabled in Bhutan by the Jabmi Act of Bhutan 2003 (JA) and the Civil and Criminal Procedures Code of Bhutan 2001 (CCPC). However, it still has the scope to be inclusive and effective. Therefore, the OAG is in the process of compiling a report on legal aid in Bhutan. This report shall highlight an overview of various legal aid models provided in some jurisdictions, with emphasis on the advantages and disadvantages, to enable us to develop a national regulatory framework that reflects the best international standards and practices to suit Bhutan's context. The report also contains information on legal aid administration and implementation, along with its benefits and constraints. Practices in countries such as Greece, Germany, India, Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America were studied and analysed to gauge different practices around the world and contextualize them for Bhutan. The report also referred to the draft United Nations United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime model law on legal aid in criminal justice systems (UN Model Legal Aid).

6. In addition, numerous general stakeholder meetings were conducted to discuss the best-suited model and the various mechanisms for providing legal aid in Bhutan. A relevant stakeholders' meeting was also conducted to discuss the stakeholders' views on the best-suited model, the scope of legal aid and establishment of an independent authority to consolidate, monitor and regulate legal aid in Bhutan. We are hopeful that, with the approval and implementation of such reforms, it will help Bhutan fulfil access to justice in line with general recommendation No. 33 of the Committee.

7. With regard to the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), in addition to what was reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic report, two additional Women and Child Protection Desks (WCPDs) have been established. This kind of service in the Police is led by either a female officer or a non-commissioned officer. As of May 2016, there are 19 female Police Officers, which include 4 cadet officers, and 415 non-commissioned officers. These officers are regularly trained on women- and child-friendly police procedures. Furthermore, the police training curricula have been reviewed and a large Training of Trainers (ToT) program was conducted in 2015.

8. Similarly, for the enhancement of access to justice for women, there are a substantial number of women working in judiciary, amounting to a total of 117: 107 Bench Clerks, 4 Court Registrars, 2 Assistant Judges and 4 Judges. The increasing number of women represented in the judiciary, where laws are exercised, is vital to creating a conducive environment for women victims.

9. To ensure justiciability, from an evidence generation perspective, the One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) at the Forensic Medicine Unit (FMU) receives and records cases as per relevant laws like the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of Bhutan 2013 (DVPA) and accordingly renders services. To date, they have recorded and accordingly rendered services in 325 cases of domestic violence, 35 cases under sexual assault and 3 cases for age estimation. Given the significant value of evidence in delivery of justice, such services support justice for women victims of violence.

III. National machinery for the advancement of women

10. As reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic report, budgets, personnel and accountability of the national machinery have witnessed a reasonable increase.

11. The NCWC's program divisions are clearly segregated into the Children Division and the Women Division. The segregation is visible from the vision statement of NCWC, wherein the vision for Child Protection and Women's Empowerment are separate, with a different focus. This distinction trickles down to the activity levels.

12. The NCWC Secretariat coordinates the implementation of the Convention. The NCWC, as the authority to which the Secretariat reports, is the de facto monitoring institution of the Convention.

13. The NCWC has sought reappointments of the Gender Focal Persons (GFPs) at the district level. The nominations have been received and the NCWC is making efforts to involve them wherever possible in its activities. It will very soon be organizing training and coordination programs for these GFPs, which is envisaged to trigger preparation of Gender Action Plans at the district level.

IV. Temporary special measures

14. The Functional Literacy Test (FLT) was reported by women as one of the barriers to participation in Local Government (LG) Elections.[1] Therefore, initiatives to prepare aspiring women leaders to pass the FLT were organized by the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW)[2] for approximately 4,000 women in 20 districts. Recognizing the primary medium of communication as Dzongkha,[3] a module on Dzongkha was also developed. Further, to allow aspiring women leaders to participate in the upcoming LG elections, the dateline for registration for the FLT was extended in all districts, because of which 42 women aspirants were able to register. These are special measures to enhance women's participation in the LG elections.

V. Stereotypes and harmful practices

15. The interventions identified under the critical area on "Gender Stereotypes and Prejudices" in the National Plan of Action for Gender (NPAG) includes conducting advocacy and awareness programs, including awareness through media to change the stereotypical mindset of the general public. It also includes interventions to conduct studies and assessments to establish various sociocultural perceptions and their impact on gender roles and relations. Further, reviewing the existing school curriculum from a gender equality perspective was also identified as one of the key interventions. While a comprehensive impact assessment of implementation of these interventions has not been carried out, the positive impact of the interventions is evident from the visible change in attitude, behaviour and practice of the people.

16. The NCWC is in the process of finalizing the NCWC strategic Plan 2016-2023 to promote gender equality. In it, addressing social and cultural gender stereotypes is identified as one of the strategic priorities of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB). To promote positive portrayal of women in media and encourage sensitive reporting on cases related to women and children, the NCWC in collaboration with the Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF)[4] has developed a guideline on reporting on issues related to women and children. 16 media professionals and journalists were given three days' training on gender issues, child protection and sensitive reporting.

17. Recognizing that parents and the community play a vital role in the lives of young people, the School-based Parenting Education and Awareness Program (SPEA) was initiated in September 2000. Increasingly, this program has been including discussion on the importance of responsibility sharing within a household and girls' education, in addition to its other aspects.

---

[1] Survey on Women's Participation in Local Government Election, National Commission for Women and Children, 2011.

[2] Bhutan Network for Empowering Women is a Civil Society Organization that focuses on inspiring more women to participate and be elected in politics at local government and national levels.

[3] Dzongkha is the national language of Bhutan.

[4] Bhutan Media Foundation is a Civil Society Organization with the mandate to support wholesome development of mass media so that it can carry out its roles and responsibilities in the interest of democracy.

18. Technical Training Institutes (TTIs) and Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) are stereotypically viewed amongst the communities mostly as an institute for male students and inappropriate for females. However, with the extensive awareness on elimination of stereotypical norms, the enrolment of female in TTIs and VTIs has increased, whereby they are trained in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, welding, mechanical and automobile. Of the total of 403 trainees, there are 159 girls enrolled in six technical institutes in 2016.

19. Regional media awareness and preparedness program for women leaders and aspiring women leaders were also conducted by BNEW to create awareness, change perceptions towards women's participation in decision-making, and build capacities of women. A total of 228 women participated in the program, which is broadcast live through Bhutan Broadcasting Service Television. In addition BNEW is also in the process of developing a five-year strategy, "Strengthening Women's Empowerment within Electoral Process" to promote women's leadership and change the stereotypical mindset on gender roles.

20. Similar efforts are also being carried out at the individual level wherein the author of the book "La Ama" (or "Yes Mother" in respect form) has emphasized the journey of women in a men's world. The book advocates recognition of women's capability and aptitude for making the right choices at the right time.

21. Relevant Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW)[5] in partnership with LG conducted awareness programs on Gender Based Violence (GBV) in the communities. The Je Khenpo, Chief Abbot of Central Monastic Body, led a similar awareness program in one of the districts during the celebration of International Day on the Elimination of Violence against Women (IDEVAW) in 2015. This initiative had a positive impact on changing the sociocultural mindset of the general public and enhanced their understanding of the negative consequences of GBV.

22. An awareness program on prevention of crimes, including GBV, is being carried out by the RBP in the schools. This has had a significant impact in changing the mindset of young girls and boys. It further enhanced their understanding of the legal provisions related to such crimes.

23. Child marriage is illegal in Bhutan. In addition to the awareness campaigns reported in the combined eighth and ninth CEDAW periodic report, the NCWC conducted awareness programs in 7 districts and municipalities, 8 communities and 7 higher secondary schools. These programs were based on data and evidence of risk and prevalence, and focused on GBV issues, including child marriage and harmful practices. Awareness programs on elimination of stereotypical and inferiority norms were conducted among 3,199 RBP personnel and 1,862 spouses, supported by the NCWC.

24. In order to mainstream gender in education, efforts such as reviewing the curriculum and teaching and learning materials have been long continuing. Also, recently, to create awareness and mainstream gender in the schools and classroom practices, workshops on gender responsiveness in teaching were conducted in seven

[5] Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women is a Civil Society Organization working towards eliminating Gender Based Violence and provides support services for the victims of Gender Based Violence.

districts. The participants included school principals, teachers, wardens and matrons, school counsellors and school captains.

25. In 2016, the Central School Immersion Program-cum-Biennial District Education Officer (DEO) conference passed a number of resolutions, of which two resolutions focus on protecting school children from discrimination and harmful practices. These include pledging for 2016 on elimination of all forms of social problems in schools such as harassment/bullying, rape/suicide/murder/theft, substance abuse, etc.

26. The PCB 2011 recognizes any person indulging in sexual intercourse with a child as a penal offence and are liable for punishment of a rape of child above the age of 12, and statuary rape in case the child is below the age of 12. Dissemination of the related provisions of the Acts, namely the PCB 2011, MA 2009, the Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan 2011 (CCPA) and other relevant legislation were carried out in seven schools and eight communities by the NCWC. The National Council Secretariat also made copies of this legislation available to all communities.

VI. Violence against women

27. Incidents of harmful traditional practices like "night hunting" are reportedly declining as a result of several awareness and advocacy programs being conducted on the ill effects of such practice and legal provisions against it, by the relevant government agencies and CSOs. Only one case of night hunting-related rape was reported in 2016 to the Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH).

28. In addition to the establishment of Women and Child Protection Units and Desks (WCPU/Ds) in the districts, Community Police Centres (CPCs) are being established by the RBP to enable people to report crimes such as GBV. There are 19 CPCs to deliver effective and efficient policing services to the community with basic police presence and facilities. Further, Mobile Community Policing, wherein the police officials conduct door-to-door campaigns, have also been introduced in 71 blocks.

29. The RBP has also initiated ToTs in dealing with victims and perpetrators of Violence Against Women (VAW), and first responders training for officials of WCPUs and WCPDs. Police officials have also been exposed to learning best practices with regard to GBV. These efforts are mainly targeted towards building capacities and developing skills amongst police officials to provide efficient services to the community.

30. The Civil and Criminal Procedures Code of Bhutan 2001 (CCPC) allows only civil cases to be settled mutually. GBV has been categorized as criminal in nature and therefore cannot be settled mutually. Efforts are being made to enhance awareness on such legal provisions by the NCWC and other relevant agencies. The Domestic Violence Prevention Rules and Regulations 2015 (DVPRR) require the RBP to maintain separate records for cases below misdemeanour that are allowed to be settled mutually. The RBP subsequently is required to report to the Competent Authority to ensure monitoring of such cases.

31. The Royal Court of Justice (RCJ) has convicted individuals mediating criminal cases. The report was broadcast to deter people from mediating criminal cases. Further, follow-ups and regular monitoring of cases that have been mutually settled

as per the provisions of the DVPA 2013 are being conducted by the NCWC and CSOs like RENEW to prevent re-occurrence of the crime. The RBP through their awareness programs at the community level also include information on the legal implications of unpermitted mediation.

32. Services, in particular shelter services, are largely dependent on CSOs and the RGoB provides significant support and partnership to such service providers. Nevertheless, recognizing the need to provide standard and coordinated support services, including shelter to women and girls who are victims of violence, the RGoB will be strengthening provision of such support services. A detailed needs assessment on establishment and operation of shelter services is planned. This will support provision of needs-based (including location) services. There are also plans to establish a toll-free help line for women and children in need. Funding has been secured and basic human resources have also been planned and approved.

33. The Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) in 2014 started the Civil Service Support Desk (CSSD). Under this, the RCSC provides windows for civil servants to complain and report sexual harassment, and also includes the NCWC as a reference point if specialized interventions are required. The CSSD also includes domestic violence under its purview.

34. The DVPA 2013 and the DVPRR 2015 provide the legislative framework for domestic violence in Bhutan. Mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of the law have been formulated. These are, namely: Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) on Case Management and Referral System for Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances; Guidelines on Accreditation and Management of Shelter Homes for Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances; and the Code of Ethics for Protection Officers/Child Welfare Officers.

35. As reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports, the DVPA 2013 aims to provide protection and support services to victims of domestic violence. It also recognizes that women constitute a majority of the victims and criminalizes the act of domestic violence. The DVPRR 2015 was finalized and came into effect on 1 January 2015. It clearly outlines the mechanism, including the roles and responsibilities of relevant institutions and individuals to ensure effective implementation of the Act.

36. As mandated by the Act to maintain information on the situation of domestic violence incidences, the NCWC plans to develop a Management Information System (MIS) for women and children, for which the necessary funding has been secured.

37. Various capacity-building programs were conducted by the NCWC for its implementing partners like the RBP, Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), RCJ and OAG on the issue of domestic violence and the implementation of DVPA 2013 and DVPRR 2015. Provisions of the DVPA 2013/DVPRR 2015 were also disseminated to the general public through workshops, advocacy campaigns and the media.

38. Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) has streamlined data collection and supported a standard approach for RENEW in provision of services, proper storage of data, analysis and information sharing.

VII. Trafficking and sexual exploitation

39. Enhanced awareness and understanding on trafficking issues are demonstrated through legal and policy reforms. The Immigration Rules and Regulations 2015 (IRR), 161, mandates: "an immigration official shall forward the cases involving non Bhutanese child found without documents to relevant agencies in the country if deemed necessary to ensure safe return".

40. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Multi Sectoral Response to Combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in Bhutan is being drafted; this SOP once endorsed will formalize roles and responsibilities between key stakeholder agencies. Under the same project, a review of legal and policy responses to trafficking has also been conducted. It was launched recently and outlines the gaps and challenges in combating trafficking. A training manual has been developed based on a needs analysis and the ToT has been conducted. The next steps are to roll out trainings for the officials working as point of first contact.

41. Focused services for victims of TIP are not available yet in the country. However, services available for the victims of violence against women and children cater to trafficking victims as well. The existing shelter services in the country provide opportunities for livelihood skills training programs for resident victims. The RGoB is also exploring establishment of shelter services, which will include skills and trainings on livelihood options.

42. In addition, a detailed needs assessment on establishment and operation of shelters is planned. This will support provision of needs based (including location) services. There are also plans to establish a toll free help line for women and children in need. Funding has been secured and basic human resources have also been planned and approved.

43. Border Districts Coordination Meeting (BDCM) is routinely held between the RGoB and the State Government of West Bengal and Assam, India (SGWBA). TIP, as an important issue, was also discussed during the 22nd round of BDCM with the State Government of West Bengal in 2014, wherein it agreed to step up vigilance on both sides. Trafficking issues are also being pursued under the Meeting of the Regional Task Force to Implement the SAARC Convention relating to Trafficking in Women and Children and Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia.

44. Bhutan continues to participate and partner in regional meetings like the Bali Process wherein TIP is on the primary agenda. Similarly, the member countries of the Bay of Bengal Initiative on Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) are also considering inclusion of TIP in their area of cooperation as proposed during the 7th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, which was held in 2015, in order to minimize the cases of TIP.

VIII. Participation in political and public life

45. As reported in the combined eighth and ninth period reports, NCWC had taken several initiatives towards creating a general consensus to draft legislation to ensure quotas for women in elected offices, including LG. As a result of these initiatives, the National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office (NPAPGEEO)

was drafted. There are two components in the plan. The first component, on creating a conducive environment, has been endorsed and is being implemented. However, the Cabinet directed NCWC to provide a detailed proposal on the other component, that focuses on creating a demand for women candidates. A detailed proposal on the implementation of the NPAPGEEO has been submitted for approval of the Cabinet.

46. There are 6women in the parliament. As per reports of the RCSC, there are 188 women in the Judiciary, 26 in senior government positions,[6] 19 in the Foreign Service and 141 women in academia.[7]

47. The requirement to pass FLT to participate in LG elections is seen as an obstacle by aspiring and semi-literate women.[8] To facilitate this, measures are being taken; for example the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB), to encourage women's participation, facilitates registration of women candidates beyond the deadline for registration: 42 women were able to avail this extended facility.

48. ECB, while undertaking awareness on voter education across the country, has also initiated advocacy programs on the importance of women in politics. These advocacy programs have been particularly effective in educating rural communities on the need for women's participation in politics. These programs are undertaken before every election in the country.

49. The participation of women in all electoral dimensions has also been enhanced through the "Labshey Ngyenshey" program (To Speak and to Listen — a debate program in the national language) which emphasized strengthening and advocating for women's participation in politics. This program has had immense constructive effect on the political participation of women, especially in LG. Amongst the 32 participants in the program, 15 women are contesting for the second LG elections, which is a relative increase from the 2011 LG elections. Of the 15 contestants, 50 per cent have registered as candidate for election of Gup (Head of Block).

50. The RGoB continues its efforts on strengthening and expanding the Non Formal Education (NFE) program, which started in 1990. As of 2015, there are 7,618 learners out of which 74.7 per cent are female learners. The learners graduate with Basic Literacy Course Certificate and Post literacy Course Certificate. The program has had a visible impact, as increasing number of NFE graduates are contesting in the LG elections. Many NFE learners are leading a better life with access to information, managing micro-businesses and by increasing income. Besides that, since a majority of the learners are female, they have a direct impact on childcare and development, and hygienic practices at home.

51. The RCSC has revised and increased paid maternity leave for women in civil service from 3 months to 6 months. Similarly, paternity leave is now 10 working days as compared to 5 before the revision. These revisions came into effect on March 1, 2016, and women who were still on maternity leave could avail it as applicable.

52. The Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MOLHR) and the NCWC are making efforts to encourage and introduce similar reforms in the corporate and private sectors.

[6] This represents women in Executive Levels of the Civil Service.
[7] Represents women in government tertiary education institutions.
[8] Survey on Women's Participation in Local Government Election, National Commission for Women and Children, 2011.

IX. Nationality

53. Any Bhutanese citizen, irrespective of their sex, is required to follow the naturalization process as mandated by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008, to transmit nationality to their children.

X. Education

54. The MoE has initiated and established Central Schools to mitigate higher number of dropouts and provide quality education. These schools are also intended to enhance access to education for girls and boys equally. The Central Schools are also in line with the Bhutan Education Blueprint 2014-2024, particularly the chapter on access and equity, which identifies and recommends establishment of Central Schools.

55. As of May 2016, 51 Central Schools have been established across the country. Students are provided free uniforms and sportswear, mattresses and bedding, and food, in addition to existing free tuition, textbooks and teaching learning materials, and stationery. Through Central Schools, more than 31,800 students are benefitting, out of which 49.8 per cent are girls. Classes in Central Schools range from Pre Primary to X or XII standard.

56. The RGoB is also building hostels, especially in rural areas. The MoE encourages the LGs to build teacher quarters in the rural areas mainly to encourage posting of female teachers. The Bhutan Education Blueprint also recommends gender friendly infrastructure and curricula. Towards creating a gender responsive environment in schools, to date, 36 female counsellors and 40 male counsellors have been appointed in 76 secondary schools, and the efforts to deploy more counsellors in schools are ongoing. To date, 1,706 girls have availed counselling services.

57. Support for empowerment of vulnerable girls comes from the highest level. In this regard, a month-long "Winter Youth Enrichment Program" is organized by His Majesty The King's Secretariat, Thimphu, and Office of the Gyaltshab, Gyalpoizhing, Mongar, in collaboration with MoE, for economically disadvantaged girls. The main objective is to protect socioeconomically disadvantaged and vulnerable girls from exploitation and harm during the long school break. They are also meaningfully engaged through a variety of programs to enhance their knowledge and skills, and build confidence and competencies that will place them on a level playing field with other students. The program benefitted 411 girls in 2014, 824 girls in 2015 and 678 girls in 2016. Based on the assessment carried out at such camps, these girls can be placed in Central Schools and included in the "GyalpoiTozey" scheme, His Majesty The King's support program for disadvantaged schoolgoing children.

58. A specific residential leadership camp "In appreciation of Leadership-Youth Leadership Training (YLT)" for students at risk of dropping out of school was conducted thrice in the last years, to address the psychosocial as well as physiological aspects of youths at risk. Students from classes VII to IX from disadvantaged families, with attitudinal and behavioural challenges, are selected to participate in the program. 27 girls in 2014, 28 in 2015 and 29 in 2016 benefitted from the program. Based on the assessment, youth are placed in Central Schools and provided follow-up psychosocial support.

59. Provision of free day meals to schools located in remote places where children are from economically disadvantaged households, or have to walk long distances to school, was introduced to help such students. As of 2015, there are a total of 52,687 benefitting from the school-feeding program, out of which 49.9 per cent are girls, and in general most beneficiaries are children from economically disadvantaged or rural households.

60. There were 41 female lecturers in Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences (KGUMS) in 2016. The substantial number of women working in issues relevant to women helps generate a favourable environment for women in general, to work in equal ratio with men. The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB)'s annual intake capacity in the 10th Five Year Plan (FYP) was only 1,500; however, due to increased allocation of resources in the 11th FYP, it is now able to take in 3,000 students annually. This resulted in the increased number of female students, from 38 per cent in 2012 to 44 per cent in 2015. In addition, the College of Natural Resources (CNR) introduced a Bachelors in Agriculture Sciences, a Masters in Development Practices and a Masters in Natural Resource Management program. Similarly, the RUB has introduced 13 new programs in the various tertiary institutes. Given the increase in tertiary education choices, this will provide avenues for increased and equal access for female students.

61. In order to provide an opportunity for students from disadvantaged groups to continue their tertiary education, His Majesty The King's Secretariat has awarded scholarships to 186 girls in total at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels who have demonstrated academic excellence, a strong commitment to public service and leadership qualities.

62. The "Gyalpoi Tozey" is a scheme whereby support is provided to needy students to enable them to receive education at par with other students. "Gyalpoi Tozey" beneficiaries comprise orphans, children of single parents without any source of income, disabled students from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, etc. They receive a certain amount of varying annual or monthly allowances based on their level of education in a particular year. Similarly, the scheme on "Education for needy students" supports a total of 1,478 girls (Class PP to Class XII — 1410 girls; Tertiary Education — 68 girls).

63. The Tarayana Foundation[9] also provides support to disadvantaged rural girls to continue their education. In 2015, the Foundation supported 13 first generation learners in tertiary education by providing scholarships to study in the Asian University of Women, Bangladesh; at the Nyeljor Institute in Gelephu (southern Bhutan) and in higher secondary levels at the Regents International in Thailand, where 99 per cent of the scholarship recipients are girls. In addition to what was reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports, the Tarayana Foundation also established 6 Early Childhood Care & Development (ECCD) Centres in 2015 in three districts, which cater to the early development needs of children between the ages of 2 and 5 years.

64. Likewise, CSOs such as RENEW have also been actively supporting scholarships for girls at various levels of education. RENEW has supported 101 girls across different education levels in 2016.

[9] The Tarayana Foundation is a Civil Society Organization that provides assistance to disadvantaged groups of people in rural communities to improve their livelihood.

65. As reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports, the number of females enrolled in and passing out from the VTIs institutes is increasing. Nevertheless, recognizing the need to encourage more participation of females, the Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) Blueprint has specific strategies to create a gender friendly environment. The TVET Blueprint, under one of its major strategies, targets conducting a baseline study, appointing GFPs and ensuring implementation of strategies developed based on the baseline study.

66. To tackle the issue of child marriage or teenage pregnancy, measures such as admission to the school of choice, in the interest of privacy, is allowed. Schools are mandated to provide all possible support to students in such a situation in order to ensure they are able to continue their education. In cases where such students prefer to discontinue their studies at that time, they can also avail the Continuing Education (CE) Program, where they can attend off-hour classes and sit for the same examination. Once graduated from the CE program, all students are treated at the same platform, and can sit for job interviews or continue higher education like any other regular student.

67. Extended Classrooms (ECRs) are reported to be successful in reducing walking distance to schools and improving access for girls. The coverage, especially in rural areas, has been significant. However, given the decrease in the student population and the fact that ECRs are established on a needs basis, the number has now been reduced. Nevertheless, ECRs with enrolment as low as nine children are being retained depending on the needs of the community and children themselves. Notwithstanding the above, providing quality and adequate facilities for a small number of students, though worthwhile, is a challenge.

68. The Bhutan Olympic Committee (BOC) provides scholarships to pursue tertiary education based on an individual's performance in games and sports, on an equal ratio for male and female. BOC in collaboration with the Royal Thimphu College (RTC) supported 3 female candidates in 2015 to pursue tertiary education. RUB also provides scholarship opportunities for females based on their performance. In 2015, 2 female candidates were enrolled under the scholarship program.

69. There are 15 federations under the BOC, which coordinates tournaments for both sexes in the same manner. The BOC will be instituting the Women in Sports Committee, to focus on enhancing women's participation in games and sports. To encourage women's participation in sports, the "B League Basketball tournament" has broken the conventional practice of awarding a higher cash prize to the male winner, by awarding the same value of prize for both categories. Further, the most prestigious bicycle race in the country awards the same value of prize money for winners in both male and female categories.

XI. Employment

70. As reported in past periodic reports, the LEA 2007 provides for protection to women in the employment sphere. The Regulations on Working Conditions 2009 (RWC) contain Regulation on Sexual Harassment where both Internal and External Sexual Harassment Complaints Procedure is included. This serves as a remedial mechanism in the workplace to curb sexual harassment.

71. Any organization that has more than five employees is mandated to have an internal service rule, which includes provisions on sexual harassment, amongst others. Furthermore, awareness and advocacy programs are regularly conducted to prevent discrimination in the workplace. Every employee in Bhutan has the right to register a complaint with the Chief Labour Administrator of Bhutan.

72. In order to ensure the implementation of such an act, MOLHR conducts regular orientation and trainings for their staff on gender and child protection issues to better understand the law from a protection perspective. A gender sensitization workshop/training in relation to the workplace was conducted in 2015 for 25 employees, of which 18 participants were females.

73. As of now, there is only one documented case on sexual harassment reported to MoLHR. RBP, in collaboration with RCJ, investigated the case, which resulted in the termination of employment of the perpetrator. In general, MoLHR has handled 35 dispute cases related to women in 2015.

74. As stated earlier, the RCSC in 2014 started the CSSD. Under this, the RCSC provides windows for civil servants to complain and report sexual harassment, and also includes the NCWC as a reference point if specialized interventions are required.

75. Every person in Bhutan can avail basic health services for free, irrespective of being a Bhutanese national or a migrant worker.

76. Wage differentials for the same nature of job, be it public or private, are non-existent. The provision on prohibition against discrimination against employees and job seekers under the LEA 2007 includes gender wage gap provisions whereby the act states, "An employer shall not discriminate against an employee with regard to wages and working conditions".

77. Efforts are being made to enhance social protection services in Bhutan. The MOLHR, in collaboration with the National Pension and Provided Fund (NPPF) office, has been conducting awareness on availing such benefits and accordingly encouraging the employers and employees to avail the services.

78. The Provision on disability insurance under the Draft National Social Protection Policy for workers in Bhutan states that "employers of workers in high risk occupation shall be required to ensure disability insurance coverage for employees, which is separate from life insurance policy". Emphasis is placed on the disability insurance scheme as an effective supplementary scheme to workers compensation, thereby helping protect workers against the loss of work abilities due to possible occurrence of disabilities. This provision is in line with promoting the rights of disabled employees in the society.

79. In line with the Cabinet's directives, requiring all the government agencies to establish Childcare Centres in the workplace, the NCWC is working with agencies to establish such centres. A feasibility study is currently being conducted to establish needs for such facilities in the government, private and informal sectors. Plans are also in place to provide accommodation to low-income market vendors from rural areas.

80. With specific reference to the informal sector, a needs assessment is currently being undertaken. The NCWC, based on the needs assessment, will be initiating the establishment of accommodation and childcare facilities for women in the informal

sector. To start with, the target group will be local vegetable vendors, street vendors and roadside workers in the capital, Thimphu. It is believed that the needs assessment will provide a reasonable overview of protection issues of women in the informal sector, which will lead to targeted actions and interventions in this area.

81. The Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA) conducted business awareness workshops at the grass-roots level to encourage entrepreneurial culture and generate interest in starting income-generating activities in rural communities. In 2015, Business Advocacy Workshops were held in different blocks. A total of 368 people participated, of which 164 were women.

82. Similarly, MoEA has conducted hard skills development trainings aimed at enhancing human capital and developing a culture of entrepreneurship, involving 78 females in various areas of training. These include apparel Designing & Tailoring, Manufacturing of Basic Construction Materials and Technologies for Small Entrepreneurs, Cane & Bamboo Furniture Making, Bronze Casting, Hand-made Paper Making, Upholstery training, Authentic Indian Cuisine Preparation and Advanced Hair and Skin Treatment training.

83. In order to build the capacities of women based in rural areas, the Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC) has established 13 clusters and raw material banks as of December 2015 in various part of the country. A total of 1,002 households benefited from this; of these 394 were females. In 2015, APIC trained 145 female artisans and craft vendors in advanced packaging, management of craft clusters and market, bookkeeping, accessory making, processing of Deysho (indigenous paper), accounting and natural dyeing for home-based weavers, to enhance the entreprencurial skills of rural women.

84. Correspondingly, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest (MoAF) continues its thrust to enhance income opportunities for the rural population involved in agricultural activities. Through its vegetable value chain program in the East, farmers' groups and cooperatives are supported to produce and market vegetables for schools and local markets. About 70 per cent of the beneficiaries under this program are women, thereby creating income opportunities for women and reducing the economic burden on Female-Headed Households (FHHs).

85. The Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE)[10] has initiated the "BAOWE Bazar" in the most frequented area of Phuentsholing city, creating livelihood opportunities for over 20 single parents residing in the city. The "BAOWE Bazar" program has provided these women with infrastructural support and necessary equipment.

86. Similarly, BAOWE also initiated a program, "Touching Lives through English" which provided English courses to over 110 women in Thimphu with little or no education. This program intends to improve their Basic English communication skills.

87. In line with what was reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports, the Tarayana Foundation establishes ECCD in rural areas, which caters to the early development needs of children between the ages of 2 and 5 years. To facilitate such services, unemployed high school graduates are trained in

[10] The Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE) is a Civil Society Organization that works towards empowering women through entrepreneurship.

developmentally appropriate curriculums, and are employed as facilitators. As of December 2015, 33 young girls were employed through this program.

88. Orienting the Principals, DEOs and Thromde Education Officers on Child Protection issues has been helpful, as it has facilitated admission for students needing a change of schools. Some schools even revisited their School Policies to make them student friendly. To disseminate appropriate information and facts on Child Protection Issues and its legal provisions to the students, parents and teachers, the Child Protection component has been integrated in the Parenting Manual as Module 6 and is disseminated further through the School-based Parenting Education and Awareness Program (SPEA).

89. Similarly, World Day against Child Labour is observed annually to create awareness on child protection issues. In order to enhance justice and protection for the child rights, MoLHR is in the process of drafting the Child Labor Action Plan.

90. The NCWC and the MOLHR collaborate on reported cases of child labour and accordingly take measures which include case reporting, monitoring, alternative options and penalties.

XII. Health

91. Maternal and infant mortality were issues of discussion at the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the 11th FYP of the districts. Accordingly, it has been included in the Annual Performance Agreements (APA)[11] of the districts where high incidences are observed. As per the MTR of the Health Sector's 11th FYP, directives have been issued to increase female health workers in the Basic Health Unit (BHU) facilities.

92. A preliminary finding from the study on "Factors influencing institutional delivery in low-performing districts of Bhutan" identified geographical terrain, social beliefs and non-availability of meals in the health facilities as factors that constrain people from visiting such facilities. Recognizing these conditions in rural areas, mobile clinics are provided mainly to cater to the nomadic women who migrate seasonally. The mobile clinics include services at community level for pre and postnatal checks. In the event of pregnant women being unable to visit health facilities for delivery, health personnel facilitate deliveries at home. A total of 528 deliveries have been made under such circumstances.

93. Every primary health care facility is mandated, oriented and trained to provide basic services on issues related to mental health. It is well integrated into the primary health care network, wherein essential drugs are also provided free of cost. All medical personnel including doctors, upon appointment, are oriented on basic mental health services. As of 2016, there are four national Psychiatrists, and the RGoB also avails expatriate services based on need and availability. It is reported that a Psychiatric Ward and Clinical Counseling courses will soon be established and introduced respectively.

94. The geriatric program (community-based medical care for the elderly) under the Department of Medical Services (DMS) was established in 2012. The objective of the Community Based Medical Care Services for the Elderly (Geriatric Program)

[11] These are performance agreements signed between the Hon'ble Prime Minister and the Governors of the 20 districts.

is the early detection and control of lifestyle-related diseases, and to maintain healthy lifestyles among the elder members of the community. The ultimate goal is to promote improvement of the health and quality of life of elderly people. Currently, the Geriatric program is established in 10 districts (Bumthang, Trashigang, Zhemgang, Samdrupjongkhar, Wangdue, Trongsa, Mongar, Lhuntse, Pemagatshel and Trashiyangtse) and it will be expanded to all the health facilities across the country during the 11th FYP by integrating into public health centres to ensure its viability and sustainability.

95. With regard to cervical cancer, all 20 districts have trained female health workers to provide necessary services. Every woman within the age group of 25 to 65 years is encouraged to conduct a Pap smear every 3 years. Since 2015, cervical cancer prevention day has been observed mainly to create awareness and recognize it as a high risk for women. MoH also provides specific support to districts with a high risk or incidence of cervical cancer. It is reported that a documentary has been produced on the issue and will be aired within the year.

96. Availability of equipment like Mammography machines remains a challenge in screening and diagnosing breast cancer. However, awareness programs are being conducted regularly, advocacy on preventing breast cancer in schools, including nunneries and, also, advocacy materials on self-examination of breast cancer are developed and disseminated to the general public.

97. PCB 2011 Section 146 states "A defendant shall be guilty of the offence of illegal abortion, if the defendant unlawfully aborts or induces expulsion of an embryo or foetus or prevents a child from being born alive, except if the act is caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the mother or when the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest, or when the mother is of unsound mental condition." Furthermore, the PCB 2011, section 147, states "the offence of illegal abortion shall be a misdemeanour". Misdemeanour is graded as maximum imprisonment term of less than 3 years and a minimum term of 1 year.

98. As per information with the MoH, as of May 2016, the following is the disaggregated data by age for females affected by HIV:

Table 1
Number of females contacted with HIV by age group

Age group	*Number of females*
Below 5	17
6-14	4
15-19	11
20-24	47
25-29	62
30-39	57
40-49	21
Above 50	7
Total	**226**

99. Adolescent-friendly health services have been introduced in the National Regional Hospitals. The objective of establishing such service is to increase access and utilization of adolescent friendly health care services in order to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancies, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) including HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and other medical problems, including mental health issues. In the 11 FYP, there is a plan to expand adolescent friendly health services in all the other districts.

100. A Peer Helpers Program has been initiated in 173 secondary schools and these peer helpers have been instrumental in identifying and referring vulnerable young people to counsellors. The Peer Helpers referred a total of 83 students to the School Guidance Counsellors in 2015. Standards for the Peer Helpers' Program and Training Manuals for both seniors (class IX-XII) and juniors (class VI-VII) students have been developed. The training Manual includes topics like Understanding Self and others, Understanding Health, Gender awareness and Vision for Future.

101. The Bhutan National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of STIs and HIV/AIDS 2012-2016 (NSP) recognizes the vulnerability of women and outlines specific measures to prevent and detect sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

102. Facilities for Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) are now available in all district hospitals and four stand-alone Health Information Service Centres (HISC), located in major urban centres to improve access. Although rapid tests are available in all the hospitals and four HISC, confirmatory tests are only available at the Royal Centre for Disease Control in Serbithang, Thimphu. Since 2013, HIV rapid diagnostic facilities are also available in BHU II and I. Thus information gathered from such facilities provides a basis for analysis and developing appropriate strategies.

103. In the APA 2016-17 of the MoH, one of the performance targets for the Ministry is attaining 90 per cent of HIV testing coverage for antenatal clinics attendees in all districts, to strengthen HIV prevention.

XIII. Rural women and disadvantaged groups of women

104. The Monitoring and evaluation framework of the RGoB encourages collection of sex-disaggregated data while reporting. It therefore indirectly calls for equal participation of women at meetings, consultations and awareness programs in the rural areas. We can observe increasing numbers of women participating based on reports.

105. Nevertheless, as reported in the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports, under the RGoB's targeted poverty reduction initiative, the Rural Economy Advancement Program (REAP) Strategic Framework, one of its 5 key principles pertains to ensuring gender sensitive and equal outcomes. As per the participatory planning guidelines for the preparation of Village Development Plans (VDPs), at least one-third of the Village Development Committee (VDC) should consist of women. Some of the activities under the program included training women groups on weaving and provision of related materials. Women's participation is also encouraged in Self-help Groups (SHGs). The socioeconomic survey of the villages

included collection of information on maternal mortality and child mortality in the household.

106. In REAP phase II program, the RGoB partners with the LG (across 26 REAP villages) and Tarayana Foundation in 49 villages across eleven districts. In these villages, 137 SHGs were formed and made functional. They initiated income-generating activities and saving schemes for the households. The program has also helped in providing various skills development trainings to build capacities, supplemented by access to improved services, to increase their productivity. In order to reach women across the country, communities that are geographically isolated and with the highest incidence of poverty have been identified.

107. In order to reduce the economic burden for the rural FHHs, the "Drinchen Ama Saving Scheme" was also introduced in 2014 by the Bhutan Development Bank Limited (BDBL), to inculcate the habit of savings amongst women in Bhutan. Considering that FHHs have limited access to such financial services, the scheme of saving, led by the bank, allows every household to participate.

108. The Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan Limited (RICBL) has also initiated the "Ashi Nangsa Living Policy", targeted exclusively towards women aged between 18 and 45 years. The scheme mainly aims at providing insurance for the clients depending upon their capacities.

109. Similarly, relevant CSOs, for instance RENEW, have initiated a microfinance project covering seven districts. The project has in total approximately 7,000 members. The project involves the most vulnerable groups of the society, who are in low-income groups covering ages sixteen and above. 90 per cent of the beneficiaries are women. The project has a total of 160 centres comprising a minimum of 15 members and a maximum of 50 members in each centre. In 2015, RENEW's microfinance project disbursed loans to 1,490 members, amounting to Nu. 65.357 million, which were used for various purposes such as starting a business, maintenance of household expenditure, education and in times of emergency.

110. RENEW also initiated diversified skills development trainings for about 177 women in 2015 in the areas of food processing and product designing.

111. The SAARC Business Association of Home Based Workers (SABAH)[12] Project has 940 members as of April 2016 across fourteen districts. The members are provided with skill up-gradation trainings such as weaving, knitting, stitching, packaging and marketing.

112. For the improvement of access to information on education, employment and necessary facilities, and for dissemination of information on other variables, the Tarayana Foundation has also set up the Community Radios, targeting two indigenous communities, in 2016.

113. His Majesty the King's Secretariat supports senior and disadvantaged groups of people who live in destitution. The group also includes abandoned and physically challenged elderly/individuals in poor socioeconomic conditions. They receive a monthly living allowance from the Secretariat. As of now, the project provides living allowances to 444 women.

[12] SABAH Bhutan is a Civil Society Organization reaching women based at home to help build their capacities and skills in making various home based products.

114. The Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (GNHCS) has undertaken a Vulnerability Baseline Assessment (VBA) of various vulnerable groups. The assessment was undertaken to broadly identify risks/challenges/barriers faced by various vulnerable groups and help develop required interventions. Amongst the groups covered were female workers working in entertainment bars, single parents and their children, and victims of domestic violence.

115. To provide social protection for the elderly people, the section on support for older persons under the Draft National Social Protection Policy for workers in Bhutan states that "the MOLHR shall establish and administer the program to provide income support to older persons without income", which as a considerate policy can help reduce the burden for older women living without income.

116. The RGoB has also directed the GNHCS to formulate a policy for people living with disabilities. In order to develop an informed policy, the GNHCS is in the process of conducting a needs assessment survey of people living with disabilities. The assessment will cover not only people living with disabilities but also include the caregiver and service providers. The data collected can be disaggregated by sex. In addition, the survey will capture amongst other things, information related to the extra challenges faced by women and children with disabilities. Similarly, information related to protection and service provision will also be collected through the survey.

XIV. Marriage and family relations

117. The MA 2009, Section Kha 7.2 regarding the custody of a child during divorce or separation, considers the best interests of a child. It states, "In the case of a married couple getting divorce, children under the age of 9 years shall remain under the custody of the mother unless the court finds compelling reasons to order otherwise. Compelling reasons by which a mother can be deprived of custody include: neglect, abandonment, unemployment and immorality, habitual drunkenness, drug addiction, maltreatment of the child, insanity, affliction with communicable illness, and any other ground that the court determines. In such a case, the custody of a child may be given to the other parent or to a third person or a recognized organization established under the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Act in the best interests of the child. The Court shall determine the frequency and conditions under which the other parent may meet with the child/children."

118. The RGOB believes that the various awareness programs on the ill effects of polygamy, amongst other things, the rights of women and the effect on child development are inculcating behavioural patterns that are resulting in falling numbers of polygamy practices.

XV. Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

119. The RGOB is confident that implementation of the Convention is progressive and, as a small country, the results are evident and visible. Therefore, it, as of now, does not see the need to sign/ratify the Optional Protocol.

Glossary

BDBL: A Bank with the responsibility of providing nationwide credit program, which mainly provide seasonal, small- and medium-term loans to the country's small farmers. It caters to farmers in the rural areas.

Competent authority: Competent authority is the National commission for women and Children (NCWC) or any other agency as may be designated by the Royal Government of Bhutan as required by the CCPA 2011, CAA 2012 and DVPA 2013 to ensure effective implementation of the Acts.

DrinchenAma Saving Scheme: Saving Scheme dedicated towards mothers to improve access to savings for women.

Dzongkha: National Language of Bhutan

Functional Literacy test (FLT): As per Election Act of Kingdom of Bhutan, 2008, FLT means an exam to test capability of reading and writing in Dzongkha in order to qualify for taking part in the LG elections

Gup: Head of a block

Gyal Poi Tozey: A welfare scheme from His Majesty The King's Secretariat to help economically disadvantaged children

Jabmi: Legal Counsel

Je khenpo: The chief Abbot of the Central Monastic body

Kidu: The Constitution defines Kidu as "benefits granted by the King or the Royal Government of Bhutan"

La ama: Respectful way of answering one's mother

LapsheyNgyenshey: To speak and to listen (a debate program aimed at building oratory skills)

RICBL: Financial service provider primarily to meet the insurance needs of its citizens as well as to actively participate in the economic development of the nation.

Thromde: Municipality